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This service is for general distribution of information and news to Sailors and Marines and their families, civilian employees, and retired members of the Navy and Marine Corps and their families. Further dissemination of this information is encouraged.

Stories for this week include:

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Headline: HIV: Sailors Put Selves at Risk

Washington, DC--The good news is that the rate of HIV infection in the military is steadily decreasing.

The bad news is, in 1995, 105 Sailors and Marines tested positive for the first time with the HIV virus. Sailors, especially, have a high rate of infection--twice that of Marines--and the rate is higher than any of the other armed services.

Why are Navy HIV rates the highest in the military? There appears to be no single reason, but statistics show that Navy personnel take more risks when it comes to behaviors that might lead to contracting the virus. Unprotected sex is by far the most common way to contract the virus, yet in a survey only 43 percent said they'd used condom protection during their last sexual encounter with an individual whose HIV status they didn't know.

Additionally, more than 25 percent of all Navy personnel report they have had at least one sexually transmitted disease. While the vast majority of these diseases weren't HIV, it is an indicator that Sailors aren't protecting themselves to prevent catching the HIV virus.

According to LCDR Ann Fallon, MC, head of epidemiology, preventive medicine, and education with the Navy's medical HIV program at National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, MD, the popular belief that it's the new Sailor who is most

vulnerable to HIV infection is incorrect. Recent studies have shown that HIV isn't restricted to any one population group. HIV-positive personnel are of both sexes, all ages, races, rank, rates, and grades.

There are, however, groups that have higher rates of infections than others. Enlisted personnel have a higher rate of infection than officers. Mid-grade petty officers, E-4 to E-6, have the highest rates of all enlisted, making up more than one-half of HIV-infected personnel. More than 75 percent of HIV-infected personnel are under the age of 30.

Another misconception is that HIV is an infection contracted on overseas deployments. While a very small percentage of Sailors and Marines are infected with an HIV strain common in Thailand or Africa, the vast majority of HIV-infected individuals contracted the disease in the United States. Just like in the civilian population, Navy personnel stationed in urban areas, such as San Diego, Washington, DC, and Norfolk, VA, become infected at a higher rate than in the Navy as a whole.

Studies also indicate it's not an "on duty" disease. There is not a single documented case of a Sailor or Marine contracting the disease in the performance of his or her job.

Fallon says that while the Navy makes a lot of information about HIV and AIDS available, there's a lot of Sailors and Marines who think they're not going to contract the disease, despite their risky actions.

"Sometimes people don't learn until they are confronted with a positive test result, and then it's too late," said Fallon.

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Headline: HIV/AIDS Conference Cites Statistics, Advances

Pensacola, FL--Advances in the treatment of HIV and AIDS are evolving so quickly that it's hard for health care professionals to keep up -- which is why more than 250 military and civilian health care providers from the southeastern U.S. gathered in Pensacola, FL, recently at an HIV/AIDS conference.

CAPT John D. Malone, MC, head of infectious diseases at National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, was a keynote speaker at the conference.

"AIDS is the leading cause of death for Americans between ages of 25 and 44," said Malone. "AIDS is the leading cause of death for both African-American men and (African-American) women."

Malone also said that the national epidemic of HIV infection is approaching a plateau, with the annual increase slowed to about five percent due to decreasing AIDS incidence among white homosexual men, especially in the areas around big cities.

This good news was offset by the news that among women AIDS is increasing fastest among those who are infected

through heterosexual intercourse. More women are infected this way than by sharing needles, said Malone.

Malone also said there's been a geographic shift in the highest incidences of AIDS. Until recently, the highest incidences were in the West and North. Now, it is shifting to the South.

LCDR James Travers Jr., HIV/AIDS coordinator at Naval Hospital (NH) Pensacola, may have provided the most hopeful news of the conference. He said there have been some major advances in the diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS patients, such as at least two new classes of medicines and a procedure known as viral load testing, which measures infectious particles in the blood stream, allowing physicians to determine the stage of the disease. This allows more definitive prognosis and helps health care providers judge treatment effectiveness.

"Two new potent drugs--protease inhibitors and nevirapine--may allow us to (someday) turn this from a universally fatal disease to a chronic illness, the type people can live with, like diabetes or high blood pressure," said Travers.

By Rod Duren, NH Pensacola

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Headline: DOD Women's Health Homepage Open for Business

Cyberspace--The Defense Women's Health Information Center (DWHIC) for military women and their families, health care professionals, health care policy-makers, and health researchers, has opened its homepage.

The DWHIC, sponsored jointly by the Public Health Service's Office of Women's Health and the Defense Women's Health Research Program, is a user-friendly homepage that provides information on women's health, family health, maintaining health while on deployment, military health care facilities, and military health issues. It also has a question and answer section to reply to queries sent via e-mail.

There's also a special section designed for health care professionals, health care policy makers and researchers. It has a searchable database of women's health issues, listings of past and present research studies and grants, an overview of the challenges facing women in the armed forces, a registry of researchers working in the area of military women's health, and an electronic sign-up to become part of the registry.

The homepage address for the DWHIC is:
<http://www.4woman.org/>.

Individuals may also call 1-800-994-9662 for additional information on specific health issues that may not be fully address on the DWHIC homepage.

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Headline: "Good Morning America" Requests Greetings

ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" (GMA) is offering

forward-deployed Sailors and Marines the opportunity to extend holiday video greetings to family and friends back home.

The greetings will be seen by millions of American TV viewers during the 1996 holiday season beginning the second week in December through the holiday season. Greetings may come from individual crewmembers but will also be considered from groups. Tapes are due 2 December.

Submissions must be originally recorded on Betacam tape--no other formats will be considered. Video and sound quality are paramount. Greetings should be of broadcast quality with little or no background noise, and should be no longer than 10-20 seconds, with a 10 second period of silent video between each greeting.

General format for individual greetings is:

Sailor/Marine: "This is greeting number XXX. 3-2-1 (one-second pause) Hi, I'm corpsman third class Sarah Jones on board USS ANYSHIP (ship or overseas base), forward deployed and operating from the sea in the Adriatic. To my friends in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and especially to my daughter, Sandy and my husband Mike, I miss you both and can't wait to see you. Happy holidays and ... good morning America!"

Format for group greetings is as follows: Group Spokesperson: "This is greeting number XXX. 3-2-1 (one second pause) We're the men and women of any division/workcenter at any base overseas/onboard USS ANYSHIP. Happy holidays to our family and friends back home. (everyone together) good morning America!"

Take care to maximize image quality (i.e. lighting, focus, and no sunglasses). Speak clearly with enthusiasm and an energetic tone. Avoid use of Navy or Marine corps acronyms such as HM1, NH, NAS, etc.

Documentation must be included with each tape that includes the crewmember's name, hometown, and parents'/spouse's name, address and phone number provided in the order the greetings appear on the tape. GMA would like to contact family members directly to advise them of planned air time of greeting. Participants should be advised that phone numbers and addresses are protected by the Privacy Act and providing this information is not required.

Given the anticipated level of response, commands should strive for highest level of quality, professionalism, and creativity in each greeting to increase the chance of being selected. Interesting backgrounds and settings will also increase chances of your greeting being aired.

Send tapes via express mail or fastest method available to: Navy Office of Information East, 605 Third Avenue, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10158-0180. The office's telephone number is (212) 801-0031.

Remember, tapes must be received by 2 December.

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Headline: Go Navy! Beat Army!

Philadelphia--This year's Army-Navy game offers an

exciting opportunity to put Sailors and Marines before millions of Americans. This year, CBS sports will televise the game. They have requested "Beat Army" video spots from the Navy and Marine Corps for broadcast during the game, scheduled for 7 December at Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia, PA. This is a great chance to showcase Navy medical and dental commands.

Your video message should include your group's identity, command, location, "Go Navy" and/or "Beat Army." Avoid the use of Navy or Marine jargon or acronyms. An example of a good message is, "We're the men and women of U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, Japan! Go Navy--Beat Army!"

Spots should be broadcast quality and 10-15 seconds in length. Betacam, Beta SP format and 3/4 inch are preferred. Submissions recorded on VHS cannot be used. The preferred location of the greeting is outdoors, and the setting should be indicative of command location and mission. However, if quality can be assured, an indoor location, such as an operating room, is acceptable. CBS also requests unique Navy or Marine Corps locations, such as overseas or shipboard, and creativity in good taste, such as singing, use of posters, and action shots. Audio quality is paramount, as is sharp appearance in appropriate uniforms. No sunglasses should be worn.

Only ready-to-air spots should be submitted. Avoid talking heads with no bodies. Begin with a close-up to identify spokespersons and participants, then zoom out if necessary to get scenery or entire group. Allow about 5-10 seconds of lead-in before actual cheer. Cue tape for viewing. Turn off the date/time imprint on video.

Include a log with each tape with your group's identity, names (if small group), command (squadron, ship, activity), and location (Rota, Adak, Pearl Harbor, etc.). Line art (unit crest/patch) for graphics display is optional.

The Navy's Chief of Information has endorsed CBS's request as an excellent way to highlight Navy teamwork and contributions of Sailors and Marines deployed forward...from the sea.

Tapes must be received no later than 25 November. Send original broadcast quality footage express mail or fastest method available to: Navy Office of Information East, 605 Third Avenue, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10158-0180. Office telephone is (212) 801-0031.

Go Navy! Beat Army!

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Headline: Don't Wait to Write Up Awards!

Washington, DC--So you think the Navy awards process is too cumbersome and time-consuming? Not if you understand it and plan properly. The very first step in the awards process is to consciously recognize that an individual or unit has done something deserving of an award. After that, it's just paperwork.

Nothing is more embarrassing and unprofessional than to have to call around on the day of transfer or retirement ceremony to find the status of an award. If someone is deserving of an award, then it is the command's responsibility to ensure it is submitted through the proper chain of command with ample lead time.

"A minimum of 60 days should be allowed for processing of awards, with the exception of retirement awards which require a minimum of 90 days," said Barb Wilson, who processes awards for the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) and the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO).

The processing time is lengthened if there is a problem with the awards package. According to Wilson, some of the common problems are misspelled names, conflicting dates on the citation and the awards form, and incomplete information.

The awards board for SECNAV and CNO approval meets every two weeks and reviews hundreds of awards packages. Incomplete packages are held until a staff member can get the proper information from the submitting command.

Procrastination appears to be the culprit for many last minute submissions. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, when it comes to recognizing the achievements of our people, "Well done is better than well said." Or, to quote a famous footwear company, "Just do it." Recognizing people for their achievements is not only beneficial to the recipient, but also contributes to the overall morale of the command.
By LT Edie Rosenthal, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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Headline: TRICARE Question and Answer

Q. Where can I find information on TRICARE on the Internet?

A. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD(HA)) has a homepage that provides information about the three TRICARE options, commonly asked questions and answers about TRICARE, and links to Lead Agents that will allow you to get regional TRICARE information.

There's also a link to the TRICARE Support Office (OCHAMPUS) and each of the military surgeons general's offices.

The ASD(HA) homepage address is: <http://www.ha.osd.mil/>

If you have a question about TRICARE, the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery now has a dedicated e-mail address so you can send in your questions and get a response via MEDNEWS. The e-mail address is TRICARE@BMS200.med.navy.mil.

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Headline: Healthwatch: So You Think You Know About AIDS

AIDS is almost 100 percent preventable, yet each year, more than a hundred Sailors and Marines are infected with the fatal disease. Do you know the facts about the HIV virus and AIDS? Below are ten questions to test your knowledge.

Questions:

1. The odds of a woman contracting the HIV virus through sexual contact is low.
2. Bleach used on needles, countertops, and other objects kills the HIV virus.
3. The body fluids that can transmit the HIV virus are blood, semen, urine, and saliva.
4. If you are HIV-positive, once you are on medication, you no longer transmit the virus to others.
5. The AIDS test is 100 reliable in indicating whether the HIV virus is present.
6. Women constitute the fastest-growing segment of the population with HIV infection.
7. Women who are HIV-infected always transmit the virus to their fetus during pregnancy or delivery.
8. HIV always develops into AIDS.
9. It takes more than two years for individuals who are infected with the HIV virus to develop AIDS.
10. Latex condoms always protects users from becoming infected with HIV.

Answers:

1. False. While lower than for men, women are the fastest growing population.
2. True. It is for external use only. Do not use for personal hygiene.
3. False. Body fluids that transmit the virus are blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and, on rare occasions, breast milk.
4. False. Once you have the virus, you can transmit it for the rest of your life.
5. False. Individuals who have behaviors that put them at risk for HIV should have periodic testing. These behaviors include unprotected sexual activity or sharing needles and syringes with someone whose status is unknown.
6. True.
7. False.
8. Maybe. Most HIV infected people have developed AIDS, but a very few have remained symptom-free for many years.
9. False. Some people may show symptoms of AIDS within months of contracting the virus.
10. False. Latex condoms reduce your chances of becoming infected with HIV, but are not 100 percent reliable. Other than abstaining from sex or participating in a truly monogamous relationship with someone who is not HIV-positive, it is the best preventive measure there is to avoid sexually contracting the disease.

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Note: World AIDS Day is Sunday, 1 December 1996.

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Feedback and comments are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact Jan Davis, MEDNEWS editor, at e-mail address mednews@bms200.med.navy.mil, telephone

202/762-3223, DSN 762-3223, or fax 202/762-3224.